Act 6
Meeting

カパア
I'D TOLD MASTER EVERYTHING.
ABOUT HOW THE AQUA VITAE HAD MADE ME INTO AN IMMORTAL SHIROGANE BATTLING THE AUTOMATA.
BE-FORE I REAL-IZED IT...

ENOUGH ALREADY !!
AND ABOUT THE VISIONS I'D STARTED TO SEE SINCE COMING TO CHINA.

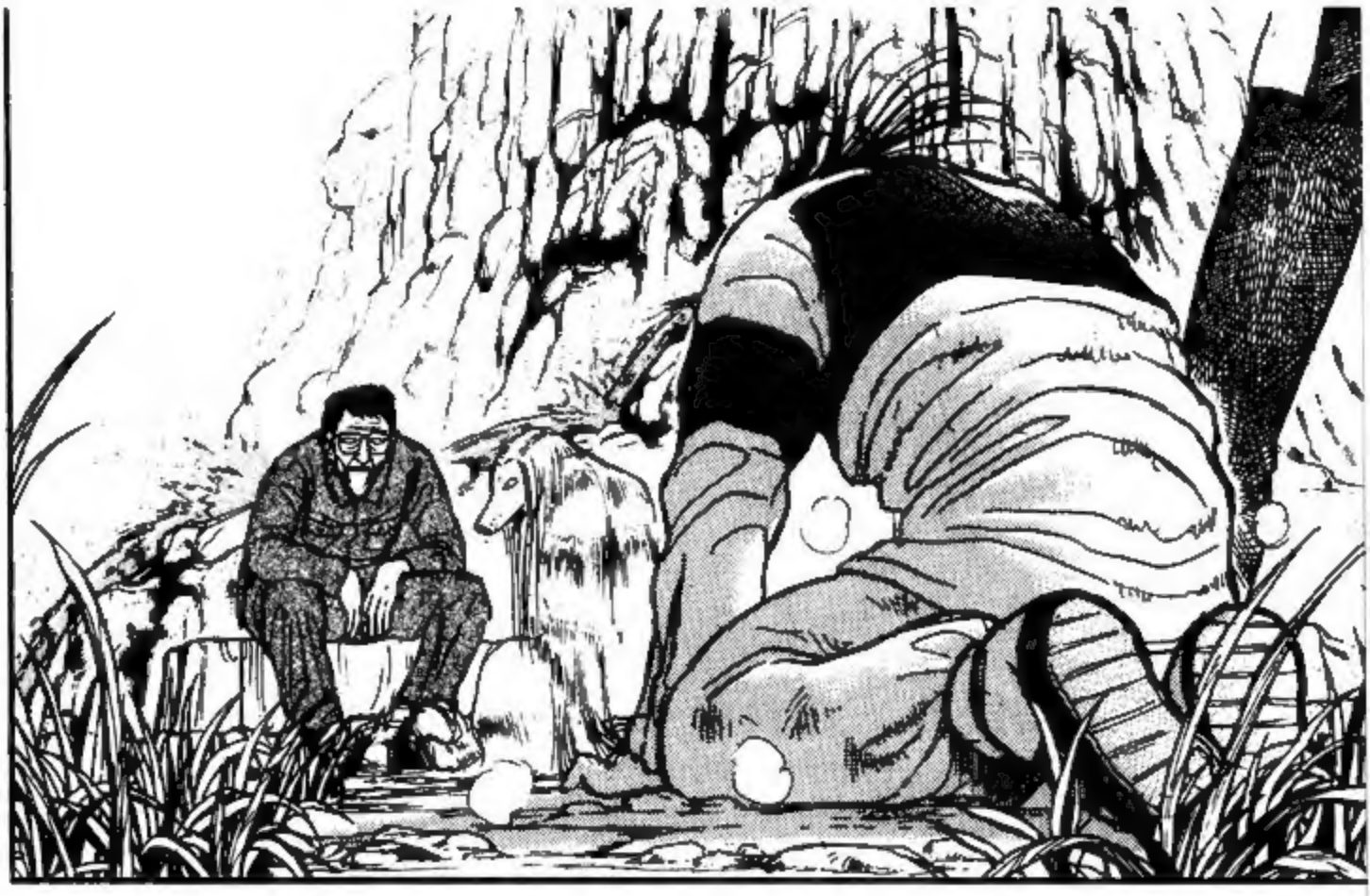
2

DO YOU REALLY EXPECT MASTER AND ME TO BELIEVE THAT NON-SENSE?

... AH.

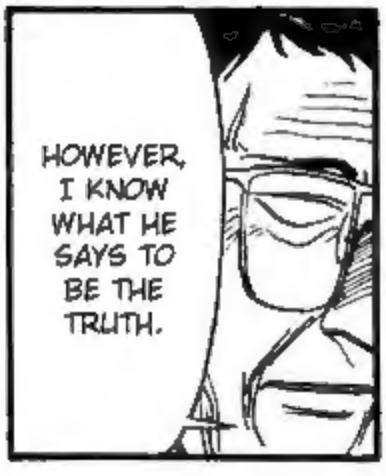
WHAT ARE YOU GOING ON ABOUT, MING-HAI?! ENOUGH BABBLING!

HELL, I BARELY BELIEVE ME.
THEY WON'T BELIEVE ME...
...THAT'S RIGHT...
WHY DID I GO OFF LIKE THAT ...?
YOU'VE HAD A HARD TIME...
I SEE.
MING-HAI...
NOBODY WOULD BELIEVE ME...
3
!



DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
YOU DON'T NEED TO BE BOTHERED WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS WHEN YOU'RE SICK LIKE THIS...

I'M SORRY, MASTER!
I'VE JUST BEEN TALKING ABOUT MYSELF !!


HOWEVER, I KNOW WHAT HE SAYS TO BE THE TRUTH.

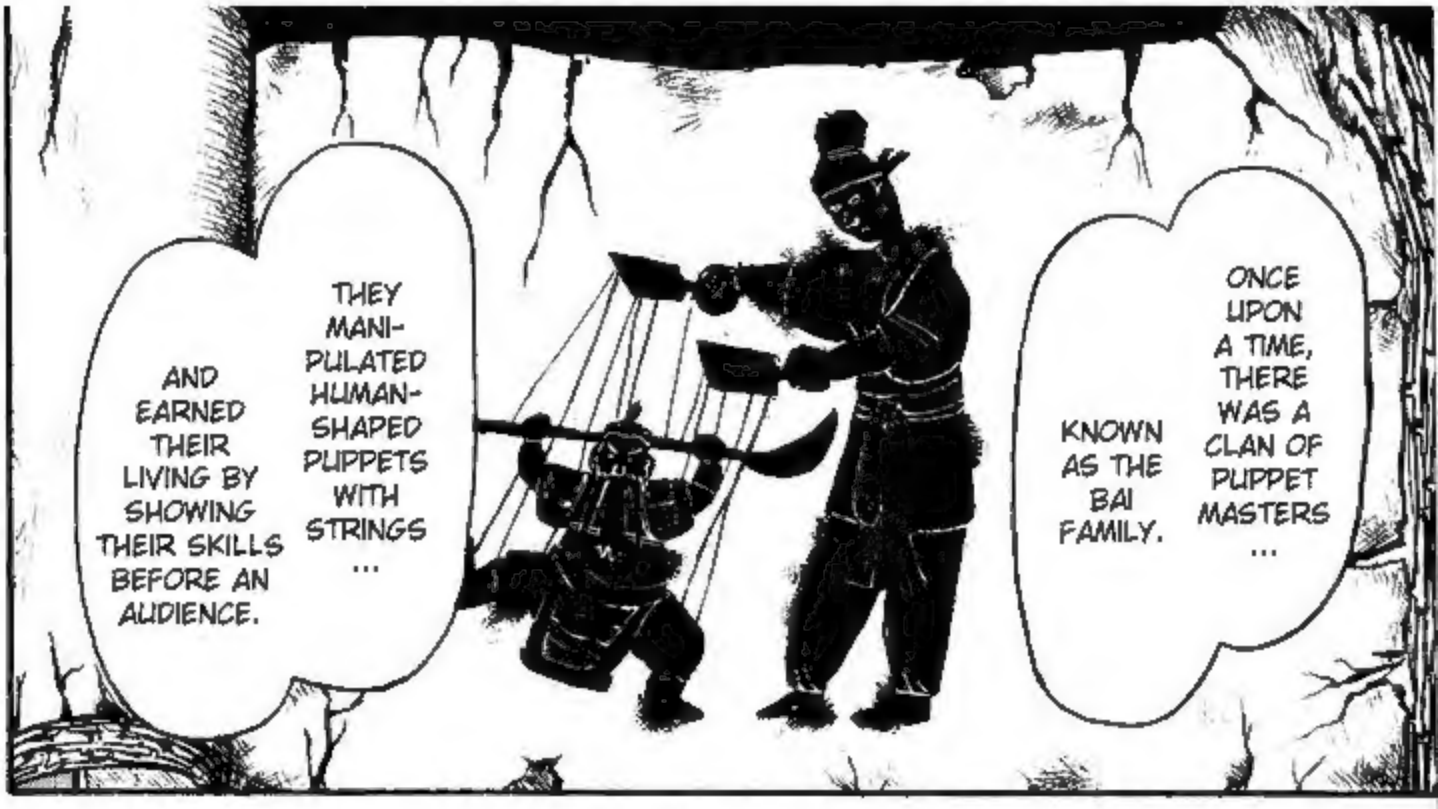
YOU CAN HARDLY BE EXPECTED TO BELIEVE HIM, WANG.
MASTER! DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE WHAT HE'S SAYING?!

THEN THERE IS MORE THAT I MUST TELL YOU, MING-HAI.
IF YOUR CIRCUM-STANCES ARE AS YOU TELL ME...
OR PERHAPS I SHOULD SAY...

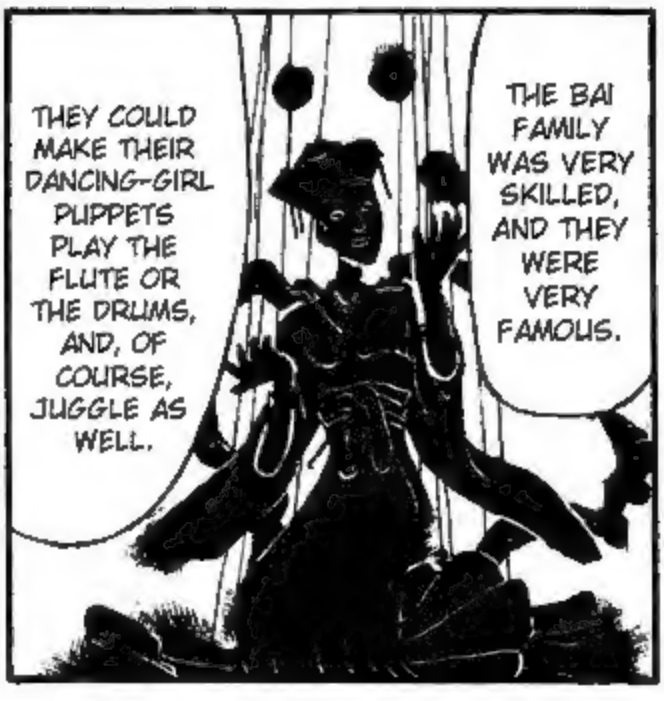
THIS IS A STORY ...
THE STORY OF THE SINS COMMITTED BY THE ANCESTORS OF THE BAI FAMILY.

WHAT'S THAT ...?

MORE THAN 200 YEARS AGO.
LISTEN WELL. THIS IS A TALE THAT BEGINS ...


ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WAS A CLAN OF PUPPET MASTERS ...
KNOWN AS THE BAI FAMILY.
THEY MANI-PULATED HUMAN-SHAPED PUPPETS WITH STRINGS ...
AND EARNED THEIR LIVING BY SHOWING THEIR SKILLS BEFORE AN AUDIENCE.

THEY HAD A WINDUP EAGLE MADE OF WOOD THAT COULD FLY FOR THREE DAYS AT A TIME OVER THE HEADS OF AN ASTONISHED CROWD.


THE BAI FAMILY WAS VERY SKILLED, AND THEY WERE VERY FAMOUS.
THEY COULD MAKE THEIR DANCING-GIRL PUPPETS PLAY THE FLUTE OR THE DRUMS, AND, OF COURSE, JUGGLE AS WELL.

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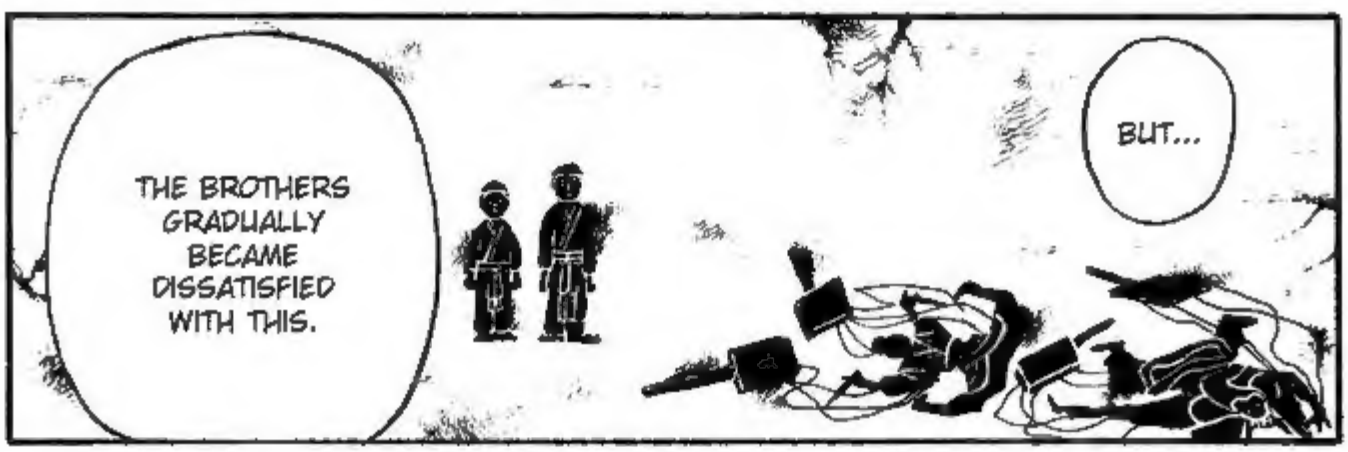
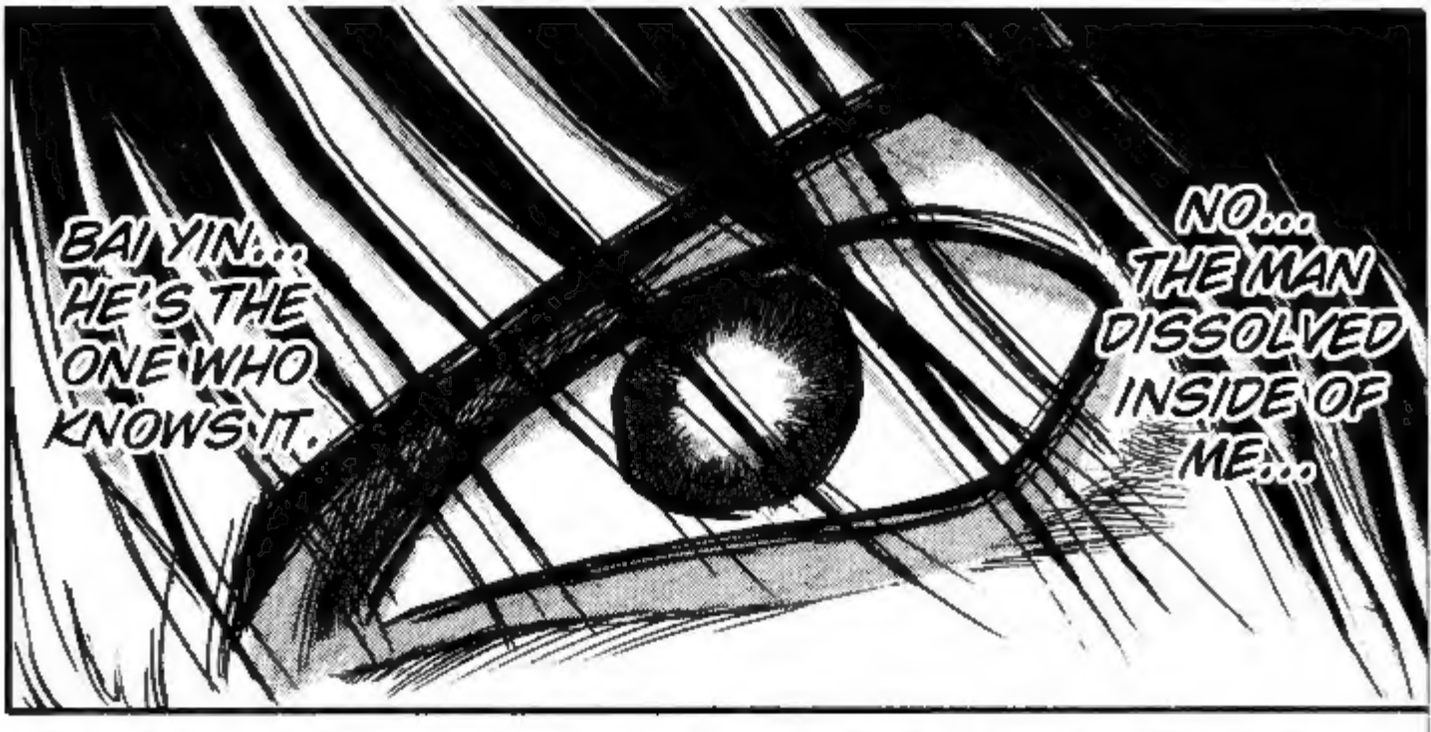
THERE WERE TWO YOUNG BROTHERS IN THE BAI FAMILY.
THE ELDER WAS CALLED YIN...
AND THE YOUNGER WAS CALLED JIN.

FROM THEIR FATHER AND THE REST OF THE FAMILY, THEY LEARNED HOW TO MANIPULATE PUPPETS...
AND HOW TO MAKE WINDUP DOLLS.
THEY GREW UP RAPIDLY.
THE BROTHERS WERE CLEVER, AND THEY GOT ALONG WELL.


THE BROTHERS GRADUALLY BECAME DISSATISFIED WITH THIS.
BUT...

I KNOW THIS ...
THAT'S RIGHT ...

THAT'S RIGHT, JIN, THAT'S RIGHT. WE ARE VERY SKILLED.
WE'RE ALREADY SO GOOD AT MAKING OUR PUPPETS DANCE.
BRO-THER YIN, BRO-THER YIN.


BAI YIN... HE'S THE ONE WHO KNOWS IT.
NO... THE MAN DISSOLVED INSIDE OF ME...

I DO TOO, BROTHER YIN.
EVEN MORE LIKE HUMANS, JIN.
BUT I WANT TO MAKE THEM DANCE...

THE ART OF 煉丹... LIAN DAN...

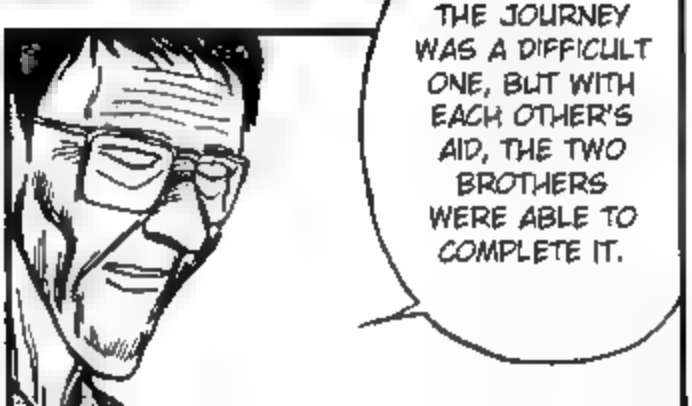
AND SO THEY TURNED TO—
THE TWO OF THEM WANTED TO MAKE THE BAI FAMILY'S PUPPETS MORE LIKE PEOPLE.

THE TWO BROTHERS IMMERSED THEMSELVES IN THESE STUDIES.
?
THE CHARACTER "丹" APPEARS IN THE WORD FOR THE ELIXIR OF LIFE. THE ART OF LIAN DAN IS THE PURSUIT OF MEDICINES THAT EXTEND LIFE.
HUH?! WHAT'S THAT?!
THE ADULTS OF THE BAI FAMILY WERE CONCERNED THAT THEY HAD TURNED AWAY FROM THEIR REAL WORK.
ALL IN ORDER TO BREATHE LIFE INTO THEIR LIFELESS PUPPETS.
A PASSAGE FROM A CERTAIN BOOK.
AFTER MANY LONG HOURS OF STUDY, THEY AT LAST CAME UPON...
BUT THE TWO BROTHERS DID NOT LISTEN TO THEM, BELIEVING THAT ALL THEY DID WAS FOR THE SAKE OF THE BAI FAMILY PUPPETS.
9
IN SOMETHING CALLED "ALCHEMY".
THE SOLUTION WAS...

HEY... WHAT'S WRONG, MING-HAI?
THEY'RE COMING OUT!
THE MEMORIES OF BAI YIN THAT WERE WRIGGLING AROUND INSIDE ME ...

HAVE FINALLY FOUND AN EXIT!

KEEP IT TO-GETHER, JIN!
BROTHER, I CAN'T KEEP WALKING ...


THE JOURNEY WAS A DIFFICULT ONE, BUT WITH EACH OTHER'S AID, THE TWO BROTHERS WERE ABLE TO COMPLETE IT.

THE FAR-AWAY LAND OF EUROPE...
THE GREAT CENTER OF THE STUDY OF ALCHEMY.
THEIR GOAL WAS...
THAT'S RIGHT, JIN... AFTER 8 YEARS, WE'RE HERE AT LAST...
BROTHER... WE'RE HERE...

PRAGUE.
AT THE CITY OF 100 SPIRES ...

CREATED A BEING THAT COULD THINK AND TALK ON ITS OWN...

USING METALS AND NATURAL MATERIALS SELECTED BY THE STARS...

AN ALITO-MATON.

WE HUMBLY BEG OF YOU...
TO ACCEPT US AS YOUR STUDENTS.

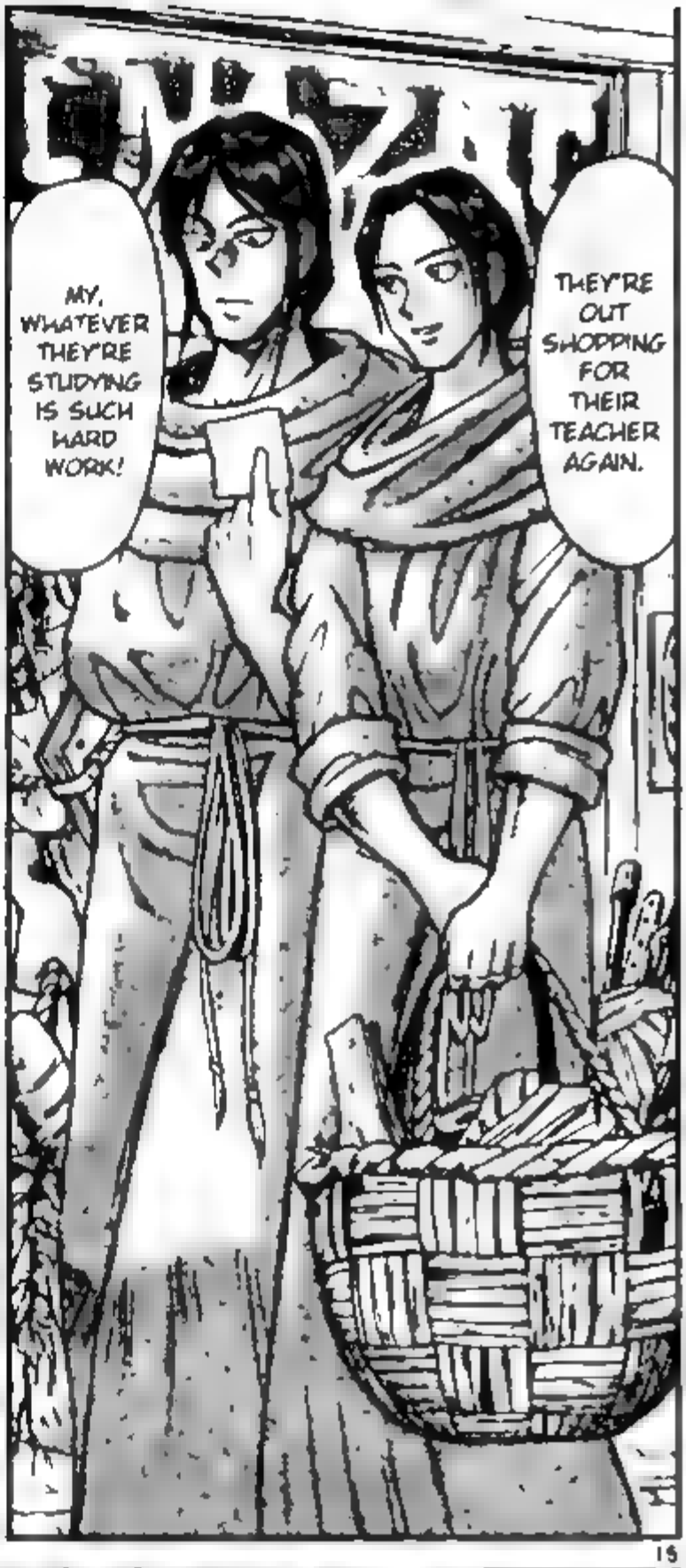
WE COME FROM THE FAR EAST.
WE WISH AS THOUGH WE WERE ONE MIND FOR YOU TO IMPART UNTO US YOUR TEACHINGS.

AND SO...
AND FINALLY A CERTAIN AGED ALCHEMIST ACCEPTED THEM AS STUDENTS.
YIN AND JIN HELD OUT THE PRECIOUS GOLD DUST THEY HAD PRESERVED THROUGHOUT THEIR ENTIRE JOURNEY...

THEY SAY THEY COME FROM THE FAR-AWAY LAND OF QING.
THAT'S WHY THEY HAVE SUCH UNUSUAL EYES.

AHH, HOW WONDER-FUL.
MASTER YIN AND MASTER JIN ARE PASSING BY.
OH! LOOK, LOOK.

MASTER JIN AND MASTER YIN ARE NOTHING OF THE SORT!
MAMA ALWAYS TELLS ME TO STAY AWAY FROM THEM, BECAUSE THEY'RE CROOKS AT WORK BREWING UP MYSTERIOUS POTIONS.


MY, WHATEVER THEY'RE STUDYING IS SUCH HARD WORK!
THEY'RE OUT SHOPPING FOR THEIR TEACHER AGAIN.

THOSE GIRLS ARE LOOKING OVER HERE AGAIN.
BRO-THER ...
SEA SALT FROM SPAIN... MICA... AND SOME NETTLES.

15

JI...

BUT I THINK GETTING TO KNOW WOMEN IS A FINE WAY TO GET CLOSER TO THE GREAT LAW.
WHAT OF IT? WE DON'T HAVE ANY TIME FOR WOMEN, JIN.

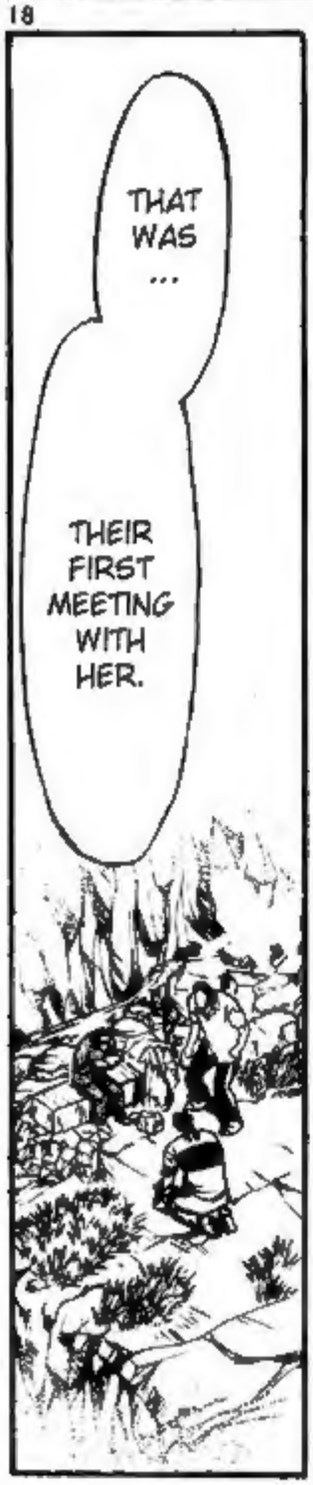
BUT ALL THE GIRLS IN TOWN THINK, "THAT FEELING LIKE HE'S DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO HIS STUDIES IS SO DREAMY!"
YOU'RE STILL NO GOOD WITH WOMEN, BROTHER YIN.
WH-WH-WHAT GOOD ARE WOMEN, ANYWAY?!
JIN...! THAT MAY BE TRUE FOR YOU, BUT I WANT NO PART OF IT!

DAMN IT, JIN! ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF YOUR BIG BROTHER ?!
EEK!

REAL-LY, BRO-THER ...
AH! SORRY, THAT WAS MY FAULT.

17

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
ER, EXCUSE ME...
S-SORRY.
YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T WAVE YOUR ARMS AROUND LIKE THAT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET.


THAT WAS ...
THEIR FIRST MEETING WITH HER.

AND WHAT ARE YOU TWO CALLED ?
MY NAME IS FRAN-CINE.
FRAN-CINE.

translation by funnuraba.tumblr.com

pg. 8-9: Chinese alchemy was focused more on the search for immortality than European alchemy, whose adherents were split between that and the transformation of lead into gold. In fiction, of course, most alchemists are more interested in immortality. The original version of this chapter uses the Japanese reading of 煉丹術 (*rentanjutsu*) as a contrast to the word for European alchemy (錬金術, *renkinjutsu*) which uses 金, gold, instead of 丹, cinnabar, which Chinese alchemists thought would prolong your life if you ingested it.

pg. 14: China was at this time under the rule of the Qing dynasty.

English has a limited number of honorifics, so some words that are completely different in Japanese have ended up the same in my translation. "Brother Yin" is Yin-*niisan* in the original, while "Brother Wang" is Wang-*aniki*, as I've previously noted. Master Yin and Master Jin are not Yin-*sensei* and Jin-*sensei*, but Yin-*san* and Jin-*san*. I wanted to avoid using "Mr." in this case for reasons that will become clear later.

Thanks to Judash137 on the mangafox forums for removing the Japanese text, and to the anonymous person who tipped me off to that!